

No surprises?

The people will have a few

There were a few late dinners eaten by members of the Farmington Board of Education last week. It was question time in the old meeting hall.

Farmington's school trustees, in the market for a new superintendent, put the seven most likely to succeed outgoing school chief Mike Flanagan on the hot seat for public interviews at school headquarters.

Well, maybe that seat was only lukewarm, designed not to burn anyone, least of all the man or woman who might be Farmington's next superintendent of schools.

If the trustees missed their dinners last week, they did so for several games of verbal softball.

We're sure the questions directed at the hopefuls were good and necessary, and we're certainly not telling the board how to pick the next superintendent.

However, we do wish some of those questions would reflect the reality we've seen as we've covered school affairs in this community over the years.

For example, right up there with *How do you evaluate your administrators?* and *What's the difference between goal-setting and strategic planning?*, we'd like to hear a prospective school chief asked:

How would you handle a mean-spirited dude who calls you a murderer during an open meeting, while still seeing that this gent's problem is addressed?

OK, school chief, it's Tuesday night, meeting night. The agenda is full, and the fourth-grade choir is ready to sing. In troop about 40 people, all of them angry at you and the board because of, oh, transportation cuts. They want answers, my friend. Now!

What kind of a leader would you be in handling them? Is it even part of your \$100,000-plus job to dirty your hands on them? Do you shuffle your papers and let the school board take the whole hit? Do you shuttle them off to one of your "soops"?

We're not being facetious. We really want to know how our next superintendent would react in situations like these. Why? Because they are going to come up. Hey, that's school business for a lot of the working folks who pay the educational freight in these school districts.

In one of the interviews, it was agreed that it would be best to have "no surprises" between school board and superintendent. That'd be wonderful. But, believe us, the people out there are going to pop a surprise or two on you.

Now, we'd like to say that this segment of the superintendent selection process has been interesting to watch. The superintendent interviews, true to the edicts of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, were open to the public and cablecast live on Channel 10.

We think that Farmington trustees have done yeoman duty in selecting the new superintendent. The board members themselves have taken the trouble to sift and winnow the more than 70 applicants, finally coming up with the seven survivors.

They could have hired a search firm to do all that work, while they concentrated on regular school business. But, no, they did it the hard way — and hopefully they and the school district will benefit.

We just wish the interview process would show the personal side of the person pitching for the prestigious Farmington superintendency.

Unplug prison wiretap bill

Innocent people will be spied on if a bill to electronically eavesdrop on telephone calls made by prisoners passes Michigan's House. It already has passed the Senate, and is back in the House for concurrence in amendments.

Proponents of House Bill 4222 say wiretapping is necessary to stop prisoners from running drug and prostitution rings, and/or committing credit card fraud, from prison. They add that wiretaps will afford them the necessary information to stop these activities and protect innocent members of the public.

Opponents note that, with a warrant, prison officials already have the right to wiretap (House Bill 4222 would allow wiretaps without a warrant, at the discretion of Department of Corrections directors). The opponents' main point, though, is far more compelling: Calls made by prisoners, in most cases at least, will be listened in on, and probably recorded.

That means a call made by a prisoner to an innocent third party who has not committed a crime will be monitored and recorded. If that call is deemed suspicious by prison officials, that innocent third party's comments could be called into question.

This bill is a mistake for several reasons. Law enforcement, with probable cause, already has the right to tap anyone's telephone conversation — if a judge can be convinced the best interests of the public will be served by the wiretap.

Delegating wiretap approval to anyone else immediately destroys any pretense of impartial-

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ity and gives one individual unchecked authority to spy on another. That is not the kind of system this society encourages.

If this sweeping authority to invade privacy is passed in this instance, then law enforcement could use this case as a lever to request similar authority in other areas.

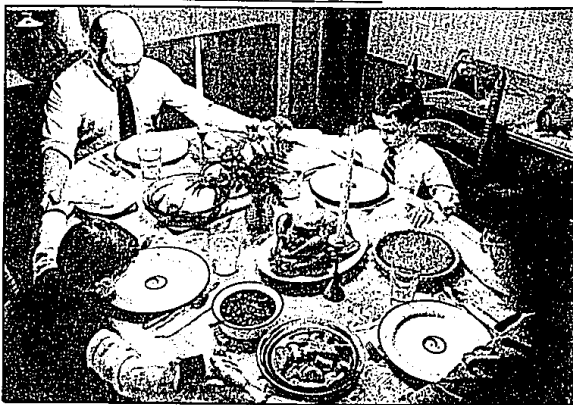
That's why it's so hard to get a wiretap warrant in the first place.

But both proponents and opponents of House Bill 4222 are missing a key point: Telephone privileges for prisoners are just that — privileges. Using the telephone is neither a Constitutional nor God-given guarantee for any prisoner.

So if prison officials suspect a prisoner is using a telephone to commit a crime, then perhaps they should reach out, touch someone and revoke that inmate's calling privileges just as they do any other privilege granted to an inmate.

After all, even with the large body of debate about prisons and their purpose, society should not bend over backward and knowingly give prisoners, already convicted of crimes, the tool they need to commit more crimes.

We gather together



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hand-in-hand: With the help of photographer Jerry Zolynsky and his family, all of us at the Observer & Eccentric wish you a happy, healthy Thanksgiving.

LETTERS

Winner says thanks

With the removal of the last political sign and the mailing of the last article of political literature, we put into history the Farmington Council race of 1993.

I would first like to thank all the residents who chose me as their candidate in this election and to my untiring campaign supporters.

A special thanks to all those residents who took the time to vote, watch the candidates night and read with interest all the articles on our council candidates.

In a fine community like Farmington, it gives me a great feeling of pride and satisfaction that you, the residents, chose to support me in my bid for re-election.

It is truly a great honor to serve as a councilperson for you and have the opportunity to represent the city of Farmington.

As with any election, it requires a sincere commitment to the job and a dedicated effort to make things happen for the betterment of our community.

I would also like to compliment the Observer and its staff for the fine election coverage and articles on all the candidates in both cities.

As I walked the city and talked to the residents, a number of them mentioned the articles in the paper and how refreshing it was to learn about the individuals and especially the candidates' hobbies and personal life.

All too often, people identify the office holder, but don't realize that he is a resident of the community and has a personal life as well.

In closing, I would like to thank my family for their support and dedication to my campaign.

I look forward to my term in office with all the enthusiasm that you have grown to expect from me, and a sincere dedication to do the best job I can for you.

I will strive for continued cooperation between the city of Farmington Hills and our school board and administration, and look forward to working with our newest council member, as we all strive in our mission to continuously improve the relationship of the residents with their city officials.

Arnold T. Campbell,
 Farmington City Council

Edit an insult

Your sarcastic editorial of Nov. 11 — "That's Hardball" — was insulting to every teacher, public and private, in this state.

It stated, "The powerful Michigan Education Association, miffed at having the trusty property tax removed as the method of paying its teachers . . ." This implies that teachers' salaries are the only costs incurred by schools.

The vast majority of teachers in this state care very much about Michigan's children, and citizens should resent politics getting in the way of the education and nurturing of their children.

Teachers need books with which to instruct children. Children need a building in which to

learn with other children. Children need lights and heat in the buildings in which they learn. Children engage in extracurricular activities in these buildings. Children need lights and heat for these extracurricular activities.

Has your editorial staff taken these costs into consideration? Your flippant remarks about teachers' salaries indicate that you're as naive about budgeting as the federal government.

Patricia Faletti, Farmington Hills

Stop crying, press

It's time the press stepped back from its self-centered reporting and noticed that Michigan is dominating much of the national debate as to how to improve government to make it work for the people.

The press in Michigan has gotten so bogged down with the whining and crying of teacher unions and special interest groups that they cannot see what is going on around here.

Michigan leads the nation in school reform, welfare reform and tax reform.

In case you folks at the press haven't noticed, our unemployment rate has plummeted, allowing the governor and our Legislature the luxury of tackling these much more difficult issues.

Gov. John Engler has done a tremendous job of offering new ideas and getting results for Michigan.

Instead of interviewing every complainer that comes along, it's time to start looking at the long-term benefits John Engler is delivering for Michigan.

Every other state in the union is looking to us in Michigan for results. Unfortunately, the press in Michigan is too blind to see it.

Kim David Jasko, Farmington

He's concerned, too

My name is Wayne Betts of the Wayne Betts Quality Cleaners West River Centre Farmington Hills.

I recently read the article on the Green and Odor Free Dry cleaner. While finding this article interesting, I feel that it makes me and other dry cleaners seem less than concerned about the environment.

When I retired from Kosins Clothes two years ago we opened up this dry cleaners with all brand-new equipment made in the U.S.A. Our dry cleaning machine is the latest technology, non-vented, odor free and environmentally safe.

After the clothing is completely prespotted for stains it is put in to our machine dry and it comes out dry in about 40 minutes.

Our motto is "Quality is foremost" and we inspect every garment to make sure this holds true. Custom pressing and packaging is applied to every garment at no extra charge. Customer satisfaction is guaranteed.

Wayne Betts, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
 What are you doing for Thanksgiving Day?

We asked this question at St. Fabian's annual Thanksgiving dinner at the Farmington Hills school.



"Me and my family always go to the Thanksgiving Parade and then we go to grandma's for dinner."
 Judy Telford
 fifth grade



"I think we're going to our grandma and gramma's."
 Robert Mousseau
 second grade



"We're gonna stay home and invite the grandmas. I help make the cranberry sauce."
 Ashley Kotko
 third grade



"We're going to our grandmas and have turkey dinner with our whole family — 30 people!"
 Chad Takacs
 second grade

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